



J. GONZÁLEZ

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“We at J. Gonzalez Injury Attorneys recognize, more than ever, the value of local journalism. Our community depends on steady and reliable voices to report the facts. Please join J. Gonzalez Injury Attorneys in supporting local journalism by reading The Monitor in print and at www.themonitor.com for round-the-clock Coronavirus updates. Stay safe!”

~J. GONZALEZ

Garay, beloved storyteller and teacher, remembered for storied life

BY ARACELI AND GENIE GARAY
SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

BEARING WITNESS

Jose Luis Garay loved cruising the Delta area: Edcouch, Elsa, La Villa and Monte Alto. He never went far but went everywhere. His family was blessed to come along for those rides — and to bear witness to those frequent adventures.

Luis was born Sept. 11, 1946, in Cedral, San Luis Potosi, Mexico. His family had already been established in Elsa for quite some time, but his birth came during a regular visit to their homeland. The fifth of six children born

to Felix and Maria Garay, Luis' life was equally nurtured from both sides of the border.

Growing up in the 1950s and '60s, he embraced American culture: the food, music, style and the cars. But traditional Mexican values of family governed the Garays.

He was an altar boy in the daily morning Masses at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Elsa. After Mass, he worked as a school crossing guard to pay for his meals at school. Placed in grade 0 when he



Jose Luis Garay

first enrolled in elementary school, Luis graduated high

school at the age of 20. He would then become the first in his family to attend college and graduate from Pan American College. Eventually, he also earned a master's degree from Texas A&I.

College life presented Luis with unique challenges. His siblings had since moved out, and Felix, his father, became too sick to work, leaving Luis with the responsibility as sole bread winner of the family.

Throughout college, he worked 70 hours a week at the H-E-B in Elsa, carried a full college load, while hitchhiking every day to and from Pan Am.

Though tempted to quit

college many times, especially when his father died, Luis knew that continuing college would be the best way to honor him.

Felix always said, “You've worked the fields. You should know by now that it is easier to lift a pencil than it is to lift a hoe. Get an education!” Luis graduated college and became a teacher.

Luis' students remember him telling the best stories. Using traditional cuentos as teaching tools, he picked the perfect expressions, intonations and crescendos to hook and reach audiences.

But his best stories were told in those late-night cruises

with family. Even on school nights, the Garays drove all around the Delta area, talking, praying and singing. The car boomed with songs from Elvis and Janis, intertwined with Juan Gabriel and Vicente Fernandez.

Each song was a storyteller. Each place, a memory-marker. Luis narrated with the same enthusiasm he used to captivate his students. Long after retirement, Luis continued his cruising routine, blessing his hometown on his shortened route, concluding each day praying his rosary.

See **GARAY** | 4A

Birders' delight



Courtesy photos

Birders at the South Padre Island Birding, Nature Center and Alligator Sanctuary are being treated to some very unusual sightings, including the hermit warbler. Experts say these birds adapted a more eastern migration approach due to fire and drought out west.

Drought, fires pushing western birds to Island, coast

BY RICK KELLEY
STAFF WRITER

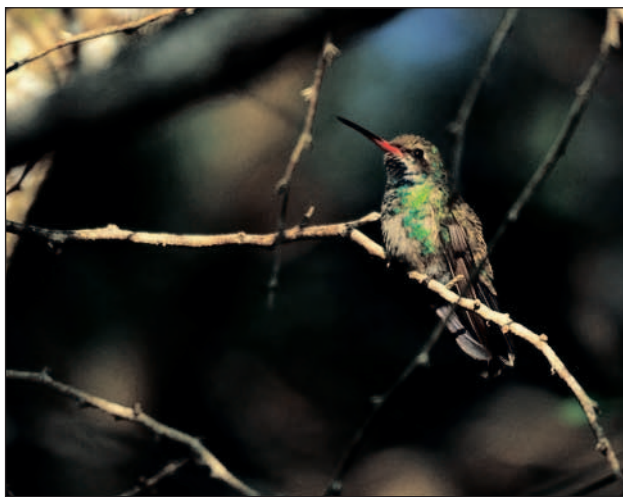
HARLINGEN — Rare western birds far from of their normal ranges are making migratory pit stops on South Padre Island.

Birders at the South Padre Island Birding, Nature Center and Alligator Sanctuary are being treated to some very unusual sightings, including the painted redstart, Scott's oriole, hermit warbler, broad-billed and calliope hummingbirds, and the Say's phoebe.

Many of these species are hundreds or, in some cases, more than a thousand miles outside their usual ranges.

“They're all very rare on the gulf coast,” Javi Gonzalez, naturalist-educator at the birding center, said Sunday. “There are very few records of them on the Island or the coast.”

Most of these western birds migrate to Central and South America each year in the fall via flyways far to the west. These north-south routes are located either side of the Rocky Mountains or even along the Pacific coast. Gonzalez believes the



Birders at the South Padre Island Birding, Nature Center and Alligator Sanctuary are being treated to some very unusual sightings, including the broad-billed hummingbird.

birds have adapted a more eastern approach due to fire and drought out west.

“More than likely its due to the situation over in the west, like fires and drought that the west has been suffering from,” he said. “Birds are very sensitive to the environment, so any changes in the air quality or things like the availability of food in their migration route, due to a drought or anything like that, will drive them elsewhere.”

“I think that's what's caus-

ing them to come east a bit more,” he added. “They're pretty much out of their range right now.”

While drought earlier this year in the Rio Grande Valley was eliminated by heavy rainfall, including precipitation dumped by Hurricane Hanna, in much of West Texas and beyond very dry conditions persist.

From the Panhandle south in Texas, and in eight to 10 states to the west, the region's drought ranges from moderate to se-

IF YOU GO

- WHAT:** Rare western bird species.
- WHERE:** South Padre Island Birding, Nature Center and Alligator Sanctuary, 6801 Padre Blvd.
- WHEN:** The nature center is open daily between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.
- TOURS:** Guided birding tours are offered by registration only Thursdays and Fridays from 9 to 11 a.m.
- RULES:** Masks are required inside the birding center and on boardwalks whenever people are closer than six feet apart.

vere and even exceptional drought conditions.

The birding center was closed earlier this year due to COVID-19 restrictions and is gradually normalizing operations.

In fact, the birding center has reinstated its popular birding tours, which are scheduled Thursdays and Fridays between 9 and 11 a.m.

See **BIRDS** | 4A

Rio Bravo man charged with capital murder set for arraignment

BY MARK REAGAN
STAFF WRITER

A 25-year-old Rio Bravo man accused of beating a man to death with a baseball bat over a wage argument is scheduled to be arraigned on a charge of capital murder Monday afternoon.

A grand jury indicted Saul Galindo Rodriguez on Oct. 6.

He's accused of killing his former employer, 59-year-old Gerardo Gonzalez, who owned a welding shop, on May 31.

“Rodriguez then provided a voluntary statement of accused where he admitted to striking the victim on the head with a baseball bat after an argument over wages which was owed to him by the victim,” Hidalgo County Sheriff J.E. “Eddie” Guerra .



Rodriguez

Deputies arrested the man on June 2.

The investigation that resulted in Rodriguez's arrest began after Gonzalez's wife reported him missing, according to authorities.

“After noticing that her husband had not arrived home she decided to go check on him at the shop. She didn't find him,” Guerra said at a news conference following Rodriguez's first appearance. “She did, however, notice that his vehicle was missing and the building was left unsecured. The lights were still on. And she found that was uncommon.”

Evidence inside that building led deputies to believe a violent incident had occurred there.

Guerra said investigators found a bat with traces of blood on it and a pool of blood on the ground outside the shop.

See **ARRAIGNMENT** | 4A

Man faces firearm charge in trio's gun case

BY LORENZO ZAZUETA-CASTRO
STAFF WRITER

The last of three men to face punishment for illegally obtaining firearms had his sentencing hearing postponed, records show.

Enrique Flores-Banda was scheduled for sentencing Wednesday, but the hearing was reset after the court agreed to grant a continuance. A new sentencing date has not been set, records show.

Flores-Banda, 26, along with Brian Austin Ibarra, 22, and Jose Carlos Monterrosa-Solis, 24, were indicted and charged for firearm violations related to their arrests in November 2019.

According to the complaint against the men, they conspired to illegally obtain firearms by providing false statements on federal firearms forms and then planned to transport them into Mexico.

Federal agents were conducting surveillance in the area near a federally licensed firearms dealer after the dealer advised agents that Ibarra had purchased a firearm.

The agents followed Ibarra to an apartment complex

in Edinburg where they observed Ibarra meet with a man later identified as Flores-Banda.

“Ibarra exited the vehicle with a firearm box and made contact with Flores-Banda,” the complaint states. “ATF/HSI agents observed the (men) return to their vehicles and proceed to exit the apartment parking lot.”

Shortly afterward, agents observed Ibarra exit his vehicle, with the aforementioned firearm box, and began to run towards the back of the apartment complex. Agents eventually caught up to Ibarra but he said the box was empty, the complaint states.

“... Ibarra stated the firearm box was empty and that he had given the firearm to Flores-Banda,” the document states.

The complaint states that agents made contact with Flores-Banda as well.

“Agents then looked under the vehicle, at which time agents observed, in plain view, a wooden stock of what appeared to be an AK style rifle attached to the undercarriage of the vehicle with white, plastic zip ties,” the

See **GUN CASE** | 4A

Sheriff: Boy, 3, fatally shoots self at his birthday party

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PORTER, Texas — A 3-year-old Houston-area boy was killed when he shot himself accidentally at his own birthday party, sheriff's officials said.

The incident was reported shortly after 4

p.m. Saturday at a home in Porter, 25 miles (40 kilometers) northeast of Houston, according to a statement from the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office.

The child's family and friends told investigators that they were playing cards when they

heard a gunshot and the boy was found with a chest wound, according to the statement. He was taken to a nearby fire station where he died.

Investigators said the child found a handgun that had fallen from a family member's pocket.

3 men found shot fatally in Dallas warehouse district

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DALLAS — Police say three men have been found shot fatally in a northwest Dallas warehouse district early Sunday.

Officers went to the scene about 2:30 a.m. Sunday where they found the wounded men. A police statement says one man died at the scene while the other two died a short time

later at a hospital.

Police said they had no information on a possible suspect and withheld identities. They also provided no information on a possible motive.



Yvonne Ramon Elections Administrator FOR THE DONNA IRRIGATION DISTRICT #1 ELECTION

November 3, 2020

(Para la Elección Distrito de Irrigación de Donna Num. 1)
(3 de Noviembre del 2020)

To the Registered Voters residing within the boundaries of the **Donna Irrigation District #1** in the County of Hidalgo, Texas (Para los votantes registrados que residen dentro de los límites del **Distrito de Irrigación de Donna Num. 1** dentro del condado de Hidalgo, Texas):

Early Voting by personal appearance will be conducted at the polling place listed on this notice. (La **votación adelantada** en persona, se llevara a cabo en la casilla de este aviso.)

EARLY VOTING POLL LOCATION (Casilla para el voto adelantado)

Donna Irrigation District Office
101 N. Salinas Blvd.
Donna, TX

Days/Dias	Dates/Fechas	Hours/Horas
Monday/lunes	October 12, 2020	Holiday/Día Festivo
Tuesday/martes	October 13, 2020	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Wednesday/miercoles	October 14, 2020	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Thursday/jueves	October 15, 2020	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Friday/viernes	October 16, 2020	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Monday/lunes	October 19, 2020	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Tuesday/martes	October 20, 2020	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Wednesday/miercoles	October 21, 2020	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Thursday/jueves	October 22, 2020	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Friday/viernes	October 23, 2020	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Monday/lunes	October 26, 2020	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Tuesday/martes	October 27, 2020	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Wednesday/miercoles	October 28, 2020	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Thursday/jueves	October 29, 2020	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Friday/viernes	October 30, 2020	8:00 am – 5:00 pm

Election Day Irrigation Polling Location
Open 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

November 3, 2020 (3 de Noviembre del 2020)

(Casilla Electoral en el día de elección el

Distrito de Irrigación abre de 7:00 a.m. a 7:00 p.m.)

Donna Irrigation District Office
101 N. Salinas Blvd.
Donna, TX

Eyes turn to Texas as early voting surge surpasses 2016

BY PAUL J. WEBER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN, Texas — Texas has already cast nearly 7 million votes, more than anywhere in America, and Glen Murdoch couldn't get his ballot in fast enough after becoming a U.S. citizen this summer.

"I was champing at the bit," said Murdoch, who moved to Austin from Australia shortly after President Donald Trump took office, and cast a ballot last week to vote him out.

It's a rush to the polls in Texas like seldom seen before.

More than a week before Election Day, Texans have already cast as many early votes as they did in 2016 and are nearly 80% of the way toward hitting the total — both early and on Election Day — counted four years ago. The voting bonanza has some Democrats optimistic that decades of low turnout and undisputed Republican dominance may soon be a thing of the past.

But what that it all means for Texas is far from clear. Voters don't register by party in the state, making it difficult to know which party or presidential candidate has an edge. Polls are unusually close in Texas, but neither President Donald Trump or Democrat Joe Biden has swung through Texas, focusing on clear battleground states instead like Arizona and Florida.

That said, the Biden campaign decided Sun-



David J. Phillip | The Associated Press

Harris County election workers Jose Vasquez, left, and Romanique Tillman prepare mail-in ballots to be sent out at election headquarters Tuesday, Sept. 29, in Houston.

day that Texas was worth a visit from the nominee's running mate, Sen. Kamala Harris, announcing that she would visit the state on Friday. Details were not released, but Harris has focused on mobilizing Black voters, which suggests that cities like Houston and Dallas might appear on her schedule.

Striking numbers of early voting are across the board in Texas — in big cities that are solidly Democrat, in tipping-point suburbs where Republicans are losing ground and, to a lesser extent, in heavily Latino counties along the border. In Harris County, home to Houston, more than 1 million votes have already been cast.

Democrats have long believed a breakthrough was only a matter of rousing millions of nonvoters, particularly within the state's booming Latino popula-

tion. Roughly 50% of voters currently registered to vote in Texas have never voted or vote infrequently, according to the voter information firm L2.

A turnout surge could come with major political consequences. Democrats believe they have a shot at winning control of the statehouse, a half-dozen competitive U.S. House races and a Senate seat, not to mention 38 electoral votes that could seal the deal for Biden.

Republicans say Democrats are getting way ahead of themselves as usual, but are also clear-eyed that the final turnout will likely be historic.

Derek Ryan, a GOP data analyst, predicted this week that Texas turnout would likely surpass 12 million, or roughly 3 million more voters than 2016 — more than the population of neighboring New Mexico.

ARRAIGNMENT

From Page 3A

Authorities discovered Gonzalez's vehicle about 10 miles away from his home near Mile 1 East and Mile 10 North in rural Mercedes with the use of cellphone records.

Gonzalez was found dead inside his vehicle, but he didn't drive himself there.

Guerra said at the time that investigators suspect Rodriguez had help.

"We believe through the statements that Mr. Rodri-

guez made (that another person is involved), and we don't believe that he was able to put the body inside the vehicle by himself and other evidence inside the vehicle leads us to believe there was another person," Guerra said.

The sheriff said deputies believe Rodriguez and possibly one other person walked away from the vehicle after it got stuck in the mud.

Guerra also witnesses said tools and money from Gonzalez's wallet were missing.

"Rodriguez's wife was located and it was learned he had arrived home Sunday morning admitting to her that he had killed someone," Guerra said.

When he made his first appearance, Rodriguez claimed self defense, saying Gonzalez hit himself first.

Hernandez, a Mexican citizen with no criminal history, remains jailed and has no bond.

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GARAY

From Page 3A

Jose Luis Garay died on July 22 from COVID-19 at the age of 73. Left to treasure his memory, and his stories, are his wife Maria Elba, his children Araceli, Jose Luis,

and Genieve, six grandchildren, and his students and colleagues at La Villa ISD. We bear witness to Jose Luis Garay, who lived a life worth living.

This story is part of an ongoing series entitled

Bearing Witness. In the series, the Museum of South Texas History aims to document some of the Rio Grande Valley lives lost to COVID-19. For more information about the museum, visit MOSTHistory.org.

GUN CASE

From Page 3A

Monterrosa-Solis was also in the vehicle with Flores-Banda, the record shows.

During their interviews with authorities, Flores-Banda stated he hired Ibarra to purchase the firearm from the dealer for \$50, the record shows.

"Flores-Banda revealed that (he) provided Ibarra with the money to purchase the firearm," the document states. "Flores-Banda stated that he directed Ibarra to purchase the firearm on his behalf. Flores-Banda stated he knew that having Ibarra

purchase the firearm on his behalf was illegal."

He also said he told Ibarra the firearm was intended for travel into Mexico.

For his part, Monterrosa-Solis said he placed the firearm he was handed in the undercarriage of the vehicle. The 24-year-old man from El Salvador, who admitted to being in the country without authorization, was implicated by Flores-Banda of having participated in firearm smuggling on at least three other occasions, the complaint states.

Ibarra, of Donna, was sentenced Monday to time served and 14 days home confinement. He will also be

required to serve three years of supervised release, court notes show.

Monterrosa-Solis was sentenced on July 31 to a 27-month prison sentence, records show.

Flores-Banda pleaded guilty to the firearm violation in February of this year.

Guns and ammunition like the ones involved in this case, purchased legally and illegally in the U.S., are often smuggled into Mexico and end up in the hands of criminals, exacerbating the violence perpetrated by drug cartel organizations as a result of the drug trade.

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BIRDS

From Page 3A

"We're doing things a bit differently than we used to," Gonzalez said. "Instead of people showing up on the day and joining us, we're having people register online because we have to limit the number of participants — we're at 10 participants."

"It's good because as we limit the number, we can focus more with the peo-

ple, because we're used to having 20-plus and that's sometimes a little too much, but with a limited number its more enjoyable for everybody," Gonzalez said.

Fees for the birding tours are in addition to admission charges, and are \$7 for teens 13 to 18 and seniors, and \$8 for adults. Reservations can be made on the center's website at www.spibirding.com/guided-tours.

There is a strong likeli-

hood that birders will be able to record sightings of some of these rare western birds along the birding center's boardwalks.

"It's pretty outstanding how they can just re-route their way and try a different way," Gonzales said. "But it's really outside of their norm, and I'm sure they go through lots of hardships in trying to find a new route out of their normal path."

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